War Food Administration
Agricultural Adjustment Agency
Division of Information

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FERTILIZER AND FOOD PRODUCTION

Ths strategic importance of fertilizer, including superphosphate, in maintaining food production requires that manufacturers of these materials be placed high on the manpower priority referral list. Inadequate production of fertilizer from lack of labor or any other cause could reduce sharply the production of food below amounts needed for vigorous and successful prosecution of the war.

Requirements for Food

The demand for food from American farms is at an all time high. Food requirements for use outside the U. S. continue to exceed the amounts available for allocation. Present and prospective food requirements include consideration of the following:

Military

By the end of 1944, United States armed forces will number almost 12 million men. Each man in uniform eats half again as much food as he did as a civilian. In a year, an average soldier drinks 402 quarts of milk, and eats 1400 pounds of meats, cereals, vegetables, and sugar as well as various amounts of other foods. Besides his current needs, a 6 to 9 months' reserve for each man must be in storage or in transit at all times. In 1944, military needs add up to about 13.5 percent of our total estimated food supply.

The importance of good, nourishing food to the success of military operations cannot be over-emphasized. Correspondents have commented on the fact that Nazis, in retreating, often abandon ammunition and equipment, but never food.

Civilian

Food has been vital in making this country the arsenal of democracy. Abundant civilian energy is the source of our military supplies. The construction of war plants and army camps, the doubling of industrial production, the unprecedented transportation of men and materials could not have been accomplished so successfully without plenty of food. United States civilians are getting about 75 percent of the 1944 food supply. It is important that the home-front population continue to be well fed.

Lend-Lease

Around 11.5 percent of our 1944 food supply is being shared with our Allies. During 1943 lend-lease deliveries of agricultural products were approximately double 1942 deliveries. The strong continuing upward trend is reflected in these figures:

	Million Tons		Million Tons
January-June 1942	1,470	January-June 1943	2,340
July-December 1942	1,695	July-December 1943	2,645

During the 3 years lend-lease has been in effect, more than 11 million tons of American food have been landed at Allied ports, including dairy products, meats, eggs, vegetables, fats and oils, and other agricultural products which draw heavily upon our soil resources. Since most of these foods have exceptional nutrition values and high vitamin content, and many were dehydrated or concentrated to save shipping space, tonnage figures do not begin to tell the story of their worth.

Representatives of Allied nations have stated that it was American food which sustained the British during the dark days after Dunkerque - that American food, flown in to Stalingrad and Leningrad, spelled the difference between partial subsistence and the more adequate diet which enabled the Russians to keep fighting. Many times food has received priority over other war materials for shipping space.

Liberated Areas

Still greater calls to ship food overseas are immediately before us. New military successes increase the requirements for feeding people in the liberated areas. When Allied armies march into liberated countries, the first order of business is to establish an organization for distributing food to the hungry and starving civil population. Our experience in Africa and Europe as well as in the Pacific area have shown that the meeting of urgent food needs of civilian populations is a military necessity to prevent disorder behind our lines. At this time we cannot accurately estimate the extent of the dependence of liberated areas upon U. S. food supplies. Whatever they are, these needs will be in addition to the requirements already discussed.

Food and the Peace.

Food stocks will be a big stake at the peace table. Whether we have order or civil war, whether we are able to create an enduring peace, may depend on the food we are able to provide hungry people. This is a joint responsibility of the United Nations; the United States must be prepared to shoulder its share.

The Illusion of Plenty

Although our current supplies of food give an appearance of adequacy -- even to the point of temporary surpluses in some perishables such as eggs -- they do not assure plenty for later needs.

The food situation is never static. Food supplies, no matter what they are at a particular time, need constantly to be replenished. In time of war, the uncertainties of military progress add to the hazards of weather and other factors influencing production and consumption of food.

In the words of Food Administrator Marvin Jones: "The only way to be sure to have enough of anything is sometimes to have too much."

In planning a food production program for 1945, we must plan for plenty. And to achieve plenty with our land, labor, and machinery stretched to the limit, we must have adequate fertilizer.

IMPORTANCE OF FERTILIZER

Production

Nineteen forty-three was the seventh successive year that the Nation's farmers broke all previous records in food production. While 1944 crops are not yet made, the July crop report of the Department of Agriculture indicated that this year's crop production will be about the same as 1943. Total farm output is some 50 percent more than the highest level reached during any year of the first World War. Farmers were able to set these new records largely because of increased yields per acre. Yields last year were nearly 25 percent above the 1923-32 average. These increased yields occurred partially because of favorable weather, but they are due in large part to better farming practices including wider use of fertilizer.

Farm Goals

Farm production goals for 1944 have called for record plantings of 380 million acres. This compared with 361 million acres planted in 1943. Since 1939, a total crop acreage has increased about 18 million acres. Compared with the 1932-41 average, the 1944 wheat goal of 67 million acres represents an increase of 12 million acres, while the 100-million-acre goal for corn is up 5 million acres. Other crop goals for 1944 are: soybeans, almost 14 million acres, compared with less than 3 million for 1932-41; dry beans, 3 million acres, compared with less than 2 million; potatoes, almost 4 million acres, compared with around 3 million.

Current indications are that unfavorable weather at planting time has caused 1944 acreages of some crops to fall below goals. In any event goals and planted acreages will be meaningless unless yields per acre can be kept high -- substantially above pre-war averages.

American farmers have no illusions - the longer the war lasts, the harder will be the struggle to produce adequate supplies of food. For one thing, there is no guarantee as to the weather. Farm machinery is wearing out. There are shortages in critical supplies. The number of hired workers on farms now is 18 percent fewer than 2 years ago, and much of the farm work has to be performed by old people and children.

Because we have about reached the limit on land which can be put into cultivation, yields per acre are definitely the limiting factor in reaching food production goals. More fertilizer for farmers means higher crop yields and more certain food supplies.

Fertilizer Program

The 1944-45 fertilizer program provides for increases over last year in the amounts of nitrogen, phosphoric acid and potash. In the case of phosphoric acid this increase is 590,000 tons P_2O_5. These greater amounts of plant food could result in an additional production of 197 million bushels of grain, 5 1/2 million tons of forage, 16 million bushels of potatoes, 1.7 million tons of vegetables, 9.7 million bushels of sweetpotatoes, as well as increased amounts of other crops.

Production of the highly important food items, dairy products and meats, is closely related to the use of fertilizer, particularly phosphates. Pasture and hay crops respond to applications of fertilizer both through increased amounts of forage produced and the lengthening of the pasture season. Adequate pasture and hay make for higher production per animal.

The quantities of fertilizers available under this program for application to grain, pasture and forage crops upon which our dairy and meat production depend will not meet requirements for maximum production of these crops even if the fertilizer program is fully realized. Rates of application per acre will still be less than rates recommended for farm use. Much acreage needing fertilizer will not receive any. It is, therefore, essential that this schedule of fertilizer production be met. It must not be curtailed by lack of labor.

Fertilizer supplies, like food, are soon used and have to be replenished. During 1936-43, for example, 7,000,000 tons of phosphoric acid were applied to American soils, the consequences of which are apparent in increased yields. But those supplies are gone. To maintain yields at high levels, continued high production and application of fertilizer are necessary.

CONTINUING BATTLE

The battle of food production is never won. Since the fruits of every victory are the result of past efforts, the present must be used to create future supplies. Unlike the production of planes and guns and tanks, the production of food cannot be speeded up suddenly. Many months are required for planting, cultivating, harvesting, and marketing a single crop.

As never before we must look ahead, planning our production well in advance, to have the necessary food when it is needed, in the amounts needed, and of the kinds needed. Fertilizer is an important weapon in our battle for food. Adequate supplies of food -- or shortages -- will have important consequences on the successful conclusion of the war and on our ability to win a lasting peace.

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